

***Governing Iowa's public
universities and special schools***

University of Iowa
Iowa State University
University of Northern Iowa
Iowa School for the Deaf
Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School
Lakeside Lab Regents Resource Center
Quad-Cities Graduate Center
Southwest Iowa Regents Resource Center
Tri-State Graduate Center



Craig A. Lang, President, *Brooklyn*
Bruce L. Rastetter, Pro Tem, *Alden*
Nicole C. Carroll, *Carroll*
Robert N. Downer, *Iowa City*
Jack B. Evans, *Cedar Rapids*
Ruth R. Harkin, *Cumming*
David W. Miles, *Dallas Center*
Katie S. Mulholland, *Marion*
Hannah M. Walsh, *Spirit Lake*

Robert Donley, *Executive Director*

March 26, 2013

The Honorable Herman Quirmbach
Chair, Senate Education Committee
Honorable Members of the Iowa Senate
Iowa Legislature
State Capitol
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Senator Quirmbach and Honorable Members of the Senate:

I am writing to thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Senate Education Committee on Monday, March 18, in preparation for the Senate's consideration of my reappointment to the Board of Regents. I appreciate the candor of the questions and comments from you and the other committee members during our discussion. It is clear from this meeting that we all share a deep regard and concern for Iowa's public universities. This includes the need for strong leadership to advance the excellence of the universities for the future of the state of Iowa and its citizens.

This strength of leadership of Iowa's public universities is demonstrated in many ways – by the Iowa legislature in the form of state support, in the governance of the Board of Regents, and in the work of the university presidents. With respect to state support, the Board of Regents thanks the legislature for its funding for the current fiscal year which included a 3.2% increase in general fund appropriations and an additional \$4 million in support of the University of Northern Iowa. The Board looks forward to working with the legislature regarding our FY 2014 appropriations request, particularly with respect to a 2.6% increase in general fund appropriations which will allow the Board to freeze tuition for the next academic year for the first time in over 30 years.

The strength of leadership of Iowa's public universities is also exemplified in the governance by the Board of Regents. Since my appointment to the Board in 2007, the state has experienced the worst recession in recent times. The resulting 21% cut in state funding to Iowa's public universities was equivalent to defunding the University of Northern Iowa one and one-half times. In response, the Regents challenged the universities to find economies and efficiencies rather than pass the increased costs to students in higher tuition rates. Our results have been successful. In the last two years, I have championed modest inflationary increases in funding and low in-state tuition increases. This year, resident undergraduate tuition increased only 3.75% compared to a national average of 7%. Our efficiency efforts continue to benefit students as they support our proposed tuition freeze for next year.

Also during my tenure, when controversy arose over need-based aid, Board leadership proposed an innovative partnership with the state that would lower undergraduate tuition rates for the first time ever and help ensure that needy Iowans can afford to attend Iowa's public universities, all while having a neutral effect on university operations. The result is our FY 2014 appropriations request of \$39.5 million in support of a need-based grant aid program for resident undergraduates.

To expand further on my testimony at the March 18 hearing, the Board has made significant progress in higher education since my appointment in 2007. The Board initiatives set forth in our Strategic Plan, under the leadership of former Board of Regents President David Miles and President Pro Tem Jack Evans, enabled our system to enhance the quality and competitiveness of our public universities. In the last two years, we have improved our four-year graduation rates by 5%; exceeded targets for distance education opportunities by over 4,000 students in the last two years; and implemented the use of student outcomes assessment tools in 88% of our undergraduate academic programs to achieve identified learning goals. The Board also continues to make significant progress in terms of student access and affordability, enrollment growth, graduation rates, operational efficiencies, online distance education, and research funding, among other areas.

The Board has also worked to continue other important outreach roles that were in place under the leadership of Regent Miles, specifically with respect to students and the media. At each Board of Regents meeting, the Board schedules a student breakfast for students' one-on-one discussion with the Regents that has also been attended by state legislators. In addition, the Board schedules at least two press availabilities with each meeting for the purpose of enhancing its communications with the media.

The strength of leadership of Iowa's public universities is also demonstrated in each university president. I truly believe that one of the most important responsibilities of the Board of Regents is to hire extraordinary leaders to run our institutions. During my tenure, I am particularly proud of the Board, and the members of the presidential search committees, in the selection of two exceptional higher education leaders, President Steven Leath at Iowa State University and Dr. Bill Ruud for the University of Northern Iowa. Moreover, I have taken many opportunities throughout my tenure as a Board member and as President to recognize the exceptional leadership of our three University presidents, and I will continue to do so.

As we demonstrated in the past year, the Board of Regents takes very seriously its responsibility to oversee Iowa's public universities. In this role, it is also the Board's fiduciary responsibility to ensure the responsible management of the universities. As such, the Board formally evaluates the work of the university presidents twice annually, and counsels the presidents, as appropriate. It is the Board's responsibility to be proactive and diligent regarding the management and oversight responsibilities of the presidents to ensure we maintain the quality of excellence all Iowans expect of our leaders. We also have a duty and responsibility to be open and transparent when the press or the citizens of our state raise questions and concerns regarding challenges with institutional policies and practices under the management of our presidents. That said, if I am reconfirmed, you have my commitment that I fully intend to continue working with the universities in a very respectful and helpful role that does not border on micromanagement.

I believe one of the hallmarks of the Board continues to be our steadfast determination to ensure our system engages in continuous improvement processes to ensure we are good stewards of the taxpayer dollars we receive. In response to concerns with the Regent institutions and our accountability to the public, we developed a Regents Accountability Initiative that was approved by the Board in June 2012. We called for an outside Efficiency Study which is being led by Regents Ruth Harkin and Bruce Rastetter to ensure the continued effective stewardship of our appropriations. In addition, we created the Board's Transparency Task Force, led by Regent Nicole Carroll, which will begin its work with an initial meeting on Friday, April 5. The role of the Task Force is to make recommendations to ensure that the Board and the institutions consistently follow best practices with respect to transparency with the public. Moreover, in drafting the initial proposal for the task force, I requested that legislators be a part of the discussion, and we are pleased to have Senator Danielson and Representative Cownie on the committee.

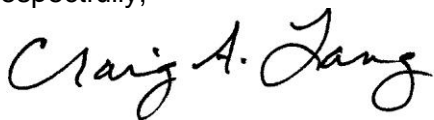
I am also very proud of the Board's support for our university faculty. We respect the critical role of faculty particularly as it relates to shared governance and academic freedom. As president of the Board, I meet with university faculty groups as often as possible to ensure their collective voice is heard and their questions and concerns are addressed directly. For the two presidential searches we completed during my tenure on the Board, the university faculty played a critical role on the search committees, and they were instrumental in the success of each search. Moreover, during each selection process, the Board held public hearings on each campus to receive important input in the process from students, faculty, administrators and the public at large.

In closing, I want to personally thank you and your Senate colleagues for the opportunity to share some of these thoughts as you consider my reappointment to the Board of Regents. I hope this information helps to give you a slightly more comprehensive picture of my role and the Board's many accomplishments over the past six years and my steadfast commitment to the public university system and the people of this state.

I respectfully ask for your vote to be reconfirmed. I truly believe my fellow Board members and I have made great improvements in public higher education over the last six years. Yes, we have more work to do, and I would sincerely appreciate the opportunity to continue our partnership with the legislature in serving Iowa's public universities and the people of this state.

I thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig A. Lang". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Craig A. Lang

c: Board of Regents

Sd/h/communication/Lang Letter to Quirmbach 032613